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## CANTICLES AND THE TAMMUZ CULT<sup>1</sup>

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Despite the fact that there is today more or less general agreement among scholars with regard to the interpretation of Canticles there is probably no book in the Old Testament concerning whose interpretation there is so little real satisfaction. Many theories have been advanced for its solution; but each has received its following, not because it solved all the problems, but rather because it was less objectionable than others. None has been fully satisfying.

The theory that used to be the most popular was that which interpreted the book as a drama of some sort. But the dramatic theory in none of its forms really fits the book. It is artificial. The text has to be modified in so many particulars and so much in the way of background, stage-setting, and the like has to be supplied by the imagination of the expositor, as to make the interpretation a very precarious one. A drama like this has no parallel in Semitic literature. We have stories and dialogues with dramatic elements, but no fully developed drama anywhere.

The more recent interpretation of the book as a collection of love lyrics, many of which were sung or recited at marriage ceremonies, is little less objectionable, as Waterman has well shown.<sup>2</sup> It requires almost as much artificial manipulation of the text as the

<sup>1</sup>A paper read before the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, December 27 1920.

<sup>2</sup>*AJSL*, XXXV, 101 ff.; cf. Cannon, *The Song of Songs*, pp. 28 ff.

other and is based on an analogy (the Syrian wedding) which is, to say the least, very questionable. By practically all scholars the book is regarded as late, but how could the Jewish fathers have possibly admitted to their sacred canon a book consisting largely of secular love songs, composed shortly before their own time and sung at their own weddings? Furthermore, if it is a late collection of folk-songs, it would naturally be written in the folk language of the time, which was assuredly not Hebrew, but Aramaic.<sup>1</sup>

Canticlès, we know, had difficulty in getting into the Canon, but it did get in and accordingly must have been regarded as religious and must for long have had religious usage. Hence the allegorical interpretation, which has come into such disrepute with modern scholars, may have a grain of truth in it after all.<sup>2</sup> This is the earliest interpretation of the book and must have some basis in fact to account for its origin. It is the only interpretation that gives the Song any religious coloring at all. Hence may it not be that we have in Canticles the late conventionalized form of the earlier liturgies that celebrated the marriage of sun-god with mother-goddess, which the world over typified the revival of life and vegetation that came with the return of the growing season?<sup>3</sup> In other words, is it not possible that the book harks back to the ancient Tammuz-Ištar cult which in its many forms is found throughout the whole ancient world,<sup>4</sup> and is not without its survivals even in our own day, as witness our Easter celebration and May Day festivities?<sup>5</sup> The dispute, therefore, with

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Thilo, *Das Hohelied*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> That it is not without some basis is well brought out by Harper, *The Song of Solomon* (*Cambridge Bible*), pp. xxxv ff.

<sup>3</sup> After writing this paper I discovered that Erbt had made a suggestion somewhat akin to this in his *Die Hebräer*, pp. 196–201. As a pan-Babylonian, however, he interprets the book astrally. Cf., also, Neuschotz de Jassy, *Le Cantique des Cantiques et le mythe d'Osiris-Hetep*, whose thesis is that Canticles consists of fragments of Hebrew translations of certain Osirian litanies made in Alexandria in the time of the Ptolemies.

<sup>4</sup> This is not intended to imply a necessarily common origin or real identity in the various local forms of the cult. Through the course of time there was doubtless much borrowing one from the other but each in its beginning was unquestionably more or less original and independent and in their similarity bespeak the common experience of mankind. For discussions of the cult see, e.g., Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*; Baudissin, *Adonis und Esmun*; Vellay, *Le Culte et les fêtes d'Adonis-Thammouz dans l'Orient antique*; Plessis, *Étude sur les textes concernant Ištar-Astarté*.

<sup>5</sup> The connection of Easter with the cult is strikingly illustrated by an incident recorded by Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore*, p. 573. A traveler in Euboea during Holy Week was struck by the general air of gloom and despondency and questioned an old woman about it; whereupon she replied: "Of course I am anxious; for if Christ does not rise tomorrow, we shall have no corn this year."

regard to the right of Canticles to a place in the Canon was prompted, not by any moral prejudices against it, which are doubtless more imaginary than real, more modern than ancient, but by its connection with a cult which through prophetic opposition had come into religious disfavor. And yet the prophets did not hesitate to draw some of their symbolism from this cult, but in doing this they gave the idea of marriage with deity an ethical content that it did not have before.<sup>1</sup> Similarly interpreted, Canticles eventually found its way into the Canon and became the Song of Songs, the best of all songs, and to Rabbi Akiba, as doubtless to others, it was "the holy of holies!"<sup>2</sup> Just so the Sabbath, although seldom even mentioned in pre-exilic literature because of prophetic opposition to anything connected with the moon cult, in the later period became of all religious institutions the most sacred.<sup>3</sup>

That the Tammuz cult was an integral part of the Hebrew religion there can be no reasonable doubt.<sup>4</sup> It was very common in the early period and despite the polemic of the prophets against it, continued right down to late times.<sup>5</sup> Excavations at Taanach and elsewhere show that the most common images in the houses of Palestine from the earliest times to the sixth century were Astarte figurines.<sup>6</sup> Isaiah explicitly records the practice of Adonis rites (Isa. 17:10 f.)<sup>7</sup>; Jeremiah could draw from the liturgy of the cult (Jer. 22:18, cf. 34:5)<sup>8</sup>; Ezekiel definitely refers to it by name (Ezek. 8:14) and even as late as Deutero-Zechariah it was still practiced (Zech. 12:11).<sup>8</sup> These are references to the more somber features of the cult which bewailed the death of the god, but there was likewise the brighter side which celebrated the resurrection of the god and his reunion with the mother-goddess in the spring, and it is chiefly this brighter side which sur-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. e.g., Hos., chap. 2; Jer., chap. 3; Isa. 54:5; 62:1-5.

<sup>2</sup> See Mishna, Yadaim, III, 5.

<sup>3</sup> See my article, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," *JBL*, XXXIII, 201 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf., e.g., so cautious a scholar as W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 170 ff.

<sup>5</sup> In fact survivals continue right down to our own day in Palestine. For the latest testimony of this see Paton, *Annual of the American School in Jerusalem*, I, 55 f.; Albright, *Bulletin of the American School in Jerusalem*, September, 1921, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> See *inter alia* Sellin, *Tell Ta'annek*, pp. 105 f.; Vincent, *Canaan d'après l'exploration récente*, chap. iii; Driver, *Modern Research as Illustrating the Bible*, pp. 56 ff.

<sup>7</sup> So all scholars since Ewald, *Hebräische Sprache*, §287 a.

<sup>8</sup> So interpreted by the majority of scholars since Movers, *Die Phönizier*, I, 246 ff. For a contrary opinion see Baudissin, *Adonis und Esmun*, pp. 91 ff.

vives in Canticles.<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that Canticles is still read as a part of the Passover celebration in the Jewish Church,<sup>2</sup> which festival is unquestionably of Tammuz origin, i.e., it harks back to a rite that celebrated the same natural phenomenon as the Tammuz cult.<sup>3</sup> It is possible, too, that the reading of the book on the eighth day of the festival (*Soferim*, XIV, 18) is not without significance. The wailing for Adonis in Cyprus, at Byblos and other places in Syria, lasted for a period of seven days,<sup>4</sup> after which followed rejoicing over his resurrection and marriage with his bride.<sup>5</sup> More significant still is the statement in the Mishna (*Taanith*, IV, 8) that it was customary at the Wood Festival on the fifteenth of Ab and at the close of the Day of Atonement for "the maidens of Jerusalem" (cf. Cant. 1:5, *et passim*) to go out and dance in the vineyards.<sup>6</sup> There was alternate singing between them and the youths, and the latter were wont to use the words of Cant. 3:11. The Gemara on this passage most aptly reports R. Nahman as identifying this yearly festival with that recorded in Judg. 21:19 ff., which, like that of Judg. 9:27, was originally a vintage feast in honor of the goddess of the vine.

It would seem to me that Waterman has conclusively shown that the word דָּדִי, ordinarily translated "my beloved," cannot properly be so translated, but is rather to be interpreted as a proper name,<sup>7</sup> but he would seem to have missed the point in not recognizing in this the god name, variously rendered Dod, Dad, Dodo, Dadu, and

<sup>1</sup> This is doubtless due to Hellenic influences. Hellenic worship was mainly cheerful and social in contrast to the Babylonian liturgy of sorrow; cf. Farnell, *Greece and Babylon*, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup> It was in the Middle Ages that the use of Canticles for liturgical purposes was officially adopted, but this doubtless simply put the seal of official approval on what had been more or less the general custom from time immemorial. There must have been some connection between the festival and the book for the two ever to have come together.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Moulton in *DB*, III, 688 ff.; Morgenstern, *AJTh*, XXI, 275 ff.

<sup>4</sup> See Movers, *Die Phönizier*, I, chap. vii; Vellay, *Le culte et les fêtes d'Adonis-Thammouz*, pp. 115, 135; Sayce, *Lectures on the Religion of the Ancient Babylonians*, p. 229; cf. also Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, § 7.

<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the rites celebrating the marriage of Ningirsu and Bau, respectively sun-god and mother-goddess, continued through a period of seven days (*Gudea*, Cyl. B, XVII, 19), and other parallels like the Roman Saturnalia might be quoted.

<sup>6</sup> These dances were the survival of the Succoth-New Year festival, originally performed in honor of the mother-goddess; cf. Morgenstern, *JQR* (New Series), VIII, 31 ff.; *JAOS*, XXXVI, 324 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *AJSL*, XXXV, 101 ff. Rather significantly the Syriac never translates דָּדִי, but always transliterates it, דדי, just as if it were a proper name.

the like,<sup>1</sup> which is none other than Addu or Adad,<sup>2</sup> the Palestinian counterpart of Tammuz.<sup>3</sup> As far back as 1887 Sayce suggested that דוד in Isa. 5:1 reflects the god name Dod or Dodo,<sup>4</sup> and Sayce,<sup>5</sup> Frazer,<sup>6</sup> Cheyne,<sup>7</sup> Winckler,<sup>8</sup> and others long ago recognized in Dod the Palestinian counterpart of Tammuz, but none apparently thought to apply this to Canticles. דוד here, whether we point it דודי with the Massoretes, or דוד with Waterman,<sup>9</sup> can be taken as a gentilic from the god name דוד; or the final yodh may be taken as the pronominal suffix of the first person. The latter would seem to be the interpretation demanded by the expression דודי (Cant. 8:5), דודי (Cant. 5:9; 6:1), and by דוד (Amos 8:14, "As liveth thy god, O Dan; and as liveth thy Dod, O Beersheba").<sup>10</sup> דודי, then, must originally have meant "My Dod," and so was a form of address quite like "My Damu" and "My Tammuz" in the Tammuz liturgies.<sup>11</sup> Later generations, however, gradually lost sight of the original significance of the expression as the Song became a conventionalized form

<sup>1</sup> For this god with the Hebrews see Wood, *JBL*, XXXV, 85 f. For an overstatement of the case see Erbt, *Die Hebräer*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> See *CT*, XXV, pl. 16, 16 f., where it is explicitly stated that the name of Adad in Amurru (i.e., Syria and Palestine) was Addu and Dād or Dadu. There is some uncertainty about the second name because the last sign is partly broken, but it must either be *ad* or *du*; hence *Da-ad* or *Da-du*.

<sup>3</sup> So first Movers, *Die Phönizier*, I, chap. vii. Cf. also Contenau, *La Déesse nue babylonienne*, *passim*, especially pp. 115 ff.; Strong and Garstang, *The Syrian Goddess*, *passim*; Barton, *Sketch of Semitic Origins*, pp. 226 ff.; Deimel, *Pantheon Babylonicum*, 23, 3048. In *CT*, XXVI, pl. 32, 88 Adad is explicitly called the god of fertility (*ša am-ba-si*), and in the *Zenjirli-Hadad Inscription*, ll. 2 ff., he is called the god who gives fruitful crops, wheat, garlic, and vineyards. In *CT*, XXXIII, pl. 2, 10 Šala, the consort of Adad, is identified with Geštin-anna, one of the names of the consort of Tammuz, and in II R. 57, 34 she is called the consort of Tammuz. Dido, a deity of Carthage, is simply another (feminine) form of Dod or Adad, and the story of her marriage with Aeneas (*Aeneid* iv. 160 ff.) is another of the many versions of the marriage of earth-goddess with sun-god, as Movers long ago recognized, *op. cit.*, I, 609 ff.; cf. also Sayce, *Lectures on the Religion of the Ancient Babylonians*, p. 56; Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, II, 638 ff.; Harrison *Themis*, p. 180, n. 2. Note too Zech. 12:11, where Adad is manifestly to be identified with Tammuz.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Adonis*, *Attis*, *Osiris*<sup>3</sup>, I, 19, n. 2.

<sup>7</sup> In a letter quoted by Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, 20, n. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *KAT*<sup>3</sup>, p. 224.

<sup>9</sup> *AJSL*, XXXV, 103.

<sup>10</sup> Reading דודי for דוד: so practically all scholars since Hoffmann, *ZATW*, III, 123.

<sup>11</sup> See Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, *passim*. A striking parallel is a form of address in one of the Amarna letters in which this same god appears, *šAddi-ia*, "My Addu" (cf. the more frequent *šamši-ia* and *ilani-ia*); Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln* No. 52, 4.

for the celebration of the coming of spring; the phrase lost its earlier significance and connection, and came to be traditionally interpreted "my beloved." But even though we thus render it, there is one passage which definitely attaches the god Dod to the book and that is Cant. 5:9: "Who but Dod is thy beloved!"<sup>1</sup> Dod must have stood here as a proper name long after its significance had been forgotten. It is one of the many survivals that betrays the early character of the book.

Our interpretation of Canticles reduces the number of characters to two,<sup>2</sup> viz., the shepherd lover (originally Dod or his personator) and his bride (originally the goddess Šala), together with a chorus of women, "the maidens of Jerusalem." Just so the Tammuz liturgies and all similar liturgies consist largely of dialogues and monologues uttered by god and goddess, interrupted here and there by the utterances of a women's chorus. In the actual recitation of the liturgy there was usually a priest to play the part of the god, a priestess to personate the goddess, and a chorus of women to take their part.<sup>3</sup> Ofttimes the king himself played the part of the god and a frequent title of the god in the liturgy was king.<sup>4</sup> So in Canticles the bridegroom is represented as king<sup>5</sup> as well as shepherd. The alleged rivalry between a king and a shepherd appears nowhere in the text. There is only one lover as there is only one maid.

In only one place, Cant. 7:1, is the bride given a name and here she is called "the Shulammitte." It is a little strange that the term has survived in only this one place, and commentators have ever been at a loss to understand why such a title should have been

<sup>1</sup> The usual translation: "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" supplies the word "another" and is grammatically questionable.

<sup>2</sup> So most modern scholars. The earlier contention that the speeches of the lover are couched in peasant language as contrasted with the more cultivated phrases of the king and are more spontaneous than those of the king would seem to be a figment of exegetical imagination and does not seem to be based on fact; see, e.g., Budde, *New World*, III, 59 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Farnell, *Cults*, III, 123 f.; *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 263 ff., and the authorities there cited; Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, 45 ff., II, 85.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pp. 26 f., 40, 64; Frazer, *Adonis*<sup>3</sup>, I, 14 ff., II, 12, 151 ff. From a tablet recently published, see Poebel, *Historical Texts*, pp. 88 f., we know now that Tammuz, Lugalmarada, and Gilgameš, all later deities of fertility, were once kings of Uruk. Osiris, too, may once have reigned as king; see Frazer, *op. cit.*, II, 159 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Scholars are unanimous in their belief that the name Solomon is secondary, cf., e.g., Jastrow, *The Song of Songs*, pp. 47 ff. As king *par excellence* he came later to be introduced into the text. Erbt, *Die Hebräer*, pp. 197 ff., regards Solomon as the later rendering of the god name Šelem or Šalma (Dod or Tammuz), which stood originally in the text.

applied to the bride. May it not be that it harks back to the name of the mother goddess Šāla, the consort of Adad?<sup>1</sup> As in the course of time דָּרָר came to be misinterpreted, so it was with the name of the goddess. First it became a gentilic; then partly on account of Solomon's introduction into the text it was confused with הַשִּׁינִימִית<sup>2</sup> of I Kings 1:3; and so what was originally the goddess Šāla came to be understood as a simple maiden. This interpretation would seem to be confirmed by Cant. 4:8, where the home of the bride is located in the Lebanon mountains:

With me from Lebanon, O my bride, my sister, from Lebanon come!  
Descend from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon,  
From the lions' dens, from the mountains of leopards!

(Cf. also Cant. 2:14.) Šāla is frequently called *bēlit šadī*, "lady of the mountain,"<sup>3</sup> and *ilāt Šāla ša šadī*,<sup>4</sup> as Adad was called *bēl šadī*, and *kur-gal*, "mighty mountain," and the mountain referred to in these titles all scholars agree is the Lebanon.<sup>5</sup> Who else but Šāla, the Palestinian goddess of vegetation and life-giving rains, can be referred to in Cant. 4:15:

A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters,  
And flowing streams from Lebanon art thou.

(Cf. also Cant. 4:12 ff.)

The bridegroom is represented as a shepherd and this we know was the usual designation of the vegetation god the world over. The regular term applied to the bride is רֵעָה and it would seem to be no

<sup>1</sup> Of interest in this connection is a god list published by Schroeder, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts*, viz., VAT 10434 (KAV No. 145), Rev. 6 = VAT 13034 (KAV No. 73), 7: *ilāt Istar Uru-silim-ma = Šul-ma-ni-t[u]*, i.e., Šulmānitu is the title of Istar of Urusilima. From the text it would appear that Urusilima was situated in Babylonia, but so far as the spelling is concerned it could very well be Jerusalem, and it is not impossible that הַשִּׁינִימִית and Šulmānitu may have some connection with each other.

<sup>2</sup> From this came the waw of הַשִּׁינִימִית. Erbt, *op. cit.*, pp. 152, 196, takes שְׁלִמִית as the feminine counterpart of שְׁלֹם (Šelem = Solomon) and compares with Šalmajati of the Amarna letters. For the latter as a possible goddess name see Weber in Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, pp. 1254 f.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., II R. 57, 33.

<sup>4</sup> See Deimel, *Pantheon Babylonicum*, 3048.

<sup>5</sup> Likewise according to Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, §§ 8 f., the native home of Adonis and Aphrodite was in the Lebanon and a river there was known as the Adonis River. Similarly, in the cuneiform literature the deities of life are domiciled in the mountain range to the north of Babylonia. It was thither that Lugalmarda went in search of Siris; in the same place Gilgameš sought out Siduri; and here the paradise of the gods with its tree of life was situated (see Albright, *AJSL*, XXXV, 161 ff.; XXXVI, 280 ff.).



mere accident that this is found outside of Canticles only in Judg. 11:37 (*kethîbbh*), where the term is applied to the priestesses who yearly bewailed the death of vegetation typified by the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter.<sup>1</sup> Even more striking than this is the bridegroom's designation of his loved one as sister and bride (Cant. 4:8 ff.; 5:1) and the veiled allusion to the bridegroom as brother (Cant. 1:6;<sup>2</sup> 3:4; 8:1) and as son (Cant. 8:5). Now if there is any one thing that is distinctive of the fertility cult in all its forms, it is just this confusion as to the relationship between god and goddess.<sup>3</sup>

As already noted, the generally accepted interpretation of Canticles today is that which makes it a collection of love and marriage songs quite after the order of nuptial songs that are still in use in certain parts of Syria. It is not impossible that some of the songs may have come from such a source (e.g., Cant. 8:8 ff.), but the similarity to marriage songs is more likely due to the fact that the marriage ceremony drew much from the rites of the fertility cult. In this there was the marriage of mother-goddess and father-god and this became the model for the human rite of marriage.<sup>4</sup> The wedding ceremony was quite akin to initiation into the mysteries and with the Greeks the same words *τέλος* and *τελετή* were commonly applied to both,<sup>5</sup> and *τέλειοι* might denote the newly wed.<sup>6</sup> The many words symbolic of love in Canticles<sup>7</sup> can of course equally well suggest human love as divine love, but this is their secondary significance. They derived this meaning from their original connection with deities of fertility, and in view of all the evidence it would seem hard to escape the conclusion that in Canticles, as it stood originally, these words were symbolic of the love of god and goddess.

The book of Canticles has unquestionably had a history similar to all the other books of the Old Testament. The present text is not

<sup>1</sup> So all modern commentators: see, e.g., Burney, *The Book of Judges*, pp. 332 ff.

<sup>2</sup> On this passage see below.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Albright, *AJSL*, XXXVI, 263 ff.; Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pp. 24, 42; Jastrow, *AJSL*, XXXIII, 109, n. 7.

<sup>4</sup> See further on this point Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, pp. 533 ff.; Farnell, *Cults*, II, 656 f.; Ramsay, *Historical Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 88 ff., and in *DB*, V, 129; Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore*, pp. 590 ff.

<sup>5</sup> See Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, p. 112; Lawson, *op. cit.*, p. 591.

<sup>6</sup> Schol. *ad Soph. Antig.* 1241, cited by Lawson, *loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> E.g., dove, gazelle, apple, mandrake, pomegranate.

the original either as to contents or arrangement. Hence it is not to be expected that much of its original character as a Tammuz liturgy has survived, any more than that much of the original character of the Sabbath, Christmas, Easter, May Day, and hosts of other institutions has survived in their present-day observance. And yet there is scarcely an allusion in the whole of Canticles that does not call to mind some feature of the Tammuz cult and receive its simplest and easiest explanation from this source. Only the more striking of these need be mentioned here. The vine (Cant. 2:13; 6:11), vineyards (1:6, 14; 2:15; 7:13; 8:11 f.), and house of wine (2:4) are everywhere distinctive of the cult. Both the bride and bridegroom are identified with or compared to myrrh (1:13; 4:6, 14), and myrrh we know was the incense used at the festival of Adonis (cf. 3:6; 5:5), and he himself was said to have been born from a myrrh tree.<sup>1</sup> As most fertility deities were born from trees or in their birth were intimately associated with trees, so the bridegroom in Canticles was born under an apple tree (8:5). Raisin-cakes (2:5) are explicitly connected with the Ištar cult by Jeremiah (Jer. 7:18; 44:19), and are frequently mentioned in this connection in the cuneiform literature.<sup>2</sup> Gazelles and hinds (Cant. 2:7, 9, 17; 7:4) were symbols of Astarte,<sup>3</sup> and doves (1:15; 2:14; 5:12; 6:9) were sacred both to her and to Adonis.<sup>4</sup> Mandrakes (Cant. 7:14), Hebrew מַדְרָאִים, is unquestionably connected with the god name מַדְרָא, and the pomegranate (4:3, 13; 6:7, 11; 7:13; 8:2) was sacred to Aphrodite.<sup>6</sup> Trees like the apple (2:3; 8:5), cedar (1:17), cypress (1:17),<sup>7</sup> and the palm tree (7:8 f.)<sup>8</sup> are everywhere connected with the vegetation

<sup>1</sup> See Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, 227 f.

<sup>2</sup> See Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, *passim*. Cf. also Theocritus, Idyl XV.

<sup>3</sup> See Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 466 ff., 472; Albright, *JAOS*, XL, 327 ff.; Barton, *Hebraica*, X, 36, 72 f.

<sup>4</sup> See Strong and Garstang, *The Syrian Goddess*, p. 86, n. 66; Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, pp. 195, 298; Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, 33, 162, n. 2; Harrison, *Themis*, pp. 176 ff.

<sup>5</sup> See Skinner in *ICC* on Gen. 30:14 ff. Rendel Harris would derive the name Aphrodite from an original פֶּרִי דְדֹדָא "fruit of Dod," *The Origin of the Cult of Aphrodite*, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> See Farnell, *Cults*, II, 642 f.; Frazer, *Spirits of the Corn*, I, 14.

<sup>7</sup> In a ritual tablet published by Zimmern, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion*, p. 123, the cypress is identified with Adad.

<sup>8</sup> In Poebel, *Historical Texts*, p. 75, Tammuz is called šu-peš, "the palm-tree fertilizer." The Dd-emblem of Osiris was probably a palm-tree, as Lutz has shown, *JAOS*, XXXIX, 196 ff.

cult. The frequent reference to garden (5:1; 6:2, 11; 7:13) and the comparison of the bride to a garden (4:12 ff.) and a park פֶּרֶט (4:13) remind one of the gardens of Adonis, referred to by Isa. 17:10,<sup>1</sup> and the gardens or groves everywhere so prominent in the cult and so frequently condemned by the Hebrew prophets. The bride is represented as veiled (4:1, 3; 6:7), even as the mother-goddess is sometimes so depicted.<sup>2</sup> The tattooing on the hands and body of the bridegroom (5:14)<sup>3</sup> call to mind the fact that the priests of Adonis similarly tattooed themselves on the hands.<sup>4</sup> The lily (i.e., sword-lily or hyacinth,<sup>5</sup> dark red in color), to which the bride is compared (2:1), and the red henna, connected with both bride and bridegroom (1:14; 4:13), have their counterpart in the anemone of Adonis and the violet of Attis. In 8:11 the vineyard of the bridegroom is located at Baal-hamon, which with Haupt is probably to be read Baal-ḥammôn,<sup>6</sup> designating an especially fruitful hill (cf. Isa. 5:1) sacred to the sun-god Baal-ḥammân.<sup>7</sup> In 1:6 we have clearly a reference to the drying up of vegetation under the scorching rays of the sun:<sup>8</sup>

Look not upon me, that I am blackened,  
That Šemeš (the sun-god) has scorched<sup>9</sup> me, my mother's son<sup>10</sup> has  
burned me.

He made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I  
not kept.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Hos. 4:13; Isa. 1:29; 65:3; 66:17.

<sup>2</sup> See Strong and Garstang, *The Syrian Goddess*, pp. 16, 21; Handcock, *The Archeology of the Holy Land*, p. 276; Jeremias, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East*, I, 121.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Haupt, *AJSL*, XVIII, 230.

<sup>4</sup> See Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, § 59.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Haupt, *op. cit.* 219, 240 f.; *Book of Canticles*, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. שֶׁמֶשׁ, "sun," Cant. 6:10.

<sup>8</sup> The usual interpretation of this passage smacks rather too much of occidentalism. Where all maidens are dusky it is difference of dress rather than shade of complexion that distinguishes the city maiden from her country cousin.

<sup>9</sup> Or "shone fiercely upon." שָׁרַח here may well be a scribal error for שָׂרַח (exclusively used of the scorching of vegetation); cf. Aq. σνρέκαυσε; Theod. περιέφρυξε; Vulg. decoloravit (so Pesh.). Although reading שָׂרַח, most scholars take it in the sense of "burn, scorch, blacken."

<sup>10</sup> Sing. not Plur. as MT; so Erbt, *Die Hebräer*, p. 198, n. 2, on the basis of the Sing. שְׁמִי which follows. This is supported, too, by the parallelism with Šemeš of the first half of the line.

<sup>11</sup> I.e., she who was the source of fertility and goddess of life is now herself dried up and deprived of life. In these cult legends it is not always the god that dies but sometimes it is the goddess. Ancient theology was no more consistent than its modern counterpart.

The dance of Mahanaim (7:1) may well have been the ritual dance that is always a feature of the fertility cult. The bride's lament and search for her lover (1:7; 3:1-4; 5:2-7; 8:1, 2, 13, 14) are quite after the order of the lament for Adonis and similar laments.<sup>1</sup> The leafy couch of 1:16 reminds one of the bed of "fresh new grass, dewy lotus, crocus, and hyacinth, thick and soft," which "the divine earth" prepared as the nuptial couch of Zeus and Hera (*Iliad* xiv. 347 ff.). This *ἱερὸς γάμος* was the subject of mystic drama at festivals all over Greece.<sup>2</sup> The bridegroom's litter (3:7 ff.) is quite like the litter or couch that played a prominent rôle in all these nature plays.<sup>3</sup> The comparison to a steed (1:9) calls to mind the fact that the horse was one of the animal forms assumed by the corn spirit,<sup>4</sup> and the October horse was a fertility rite in Rome.<sup>5</sup> A very common *motif* in the cult legends of deities of fertility is the seduction of the male,<sup>6</sup> and this is not altogether lacking in Canticles (cf., e.g., 3:4).<sup>7</sup> Similarly, as the goddess plays rather the more important rôle in the drama of life and nature, with the god only a subsidiary actor,<sup>8</sup> so it is with the bride in Canticles. The reference to foxes in 2:15,<sup>9</sup> like the fox story in *Judg.* 15:4 ff.,<sup>10</sup> would seem to be reminiscent of an ancient

<sup>1</sup> Cf., e.g., the lamentation of Isis over Osiris, Erman, *Die ägyptische Religion*<sup>2</sup>, pp. 39 ff.; the Adonia in Theocritus, *Idyl* XV, and in Bion, *Idyl* I; Istar's lament and search for Tammuz, Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pp. 15, 20, 32, 51 f.

<sup>2</sup> For the chief references see Farnell, *Cults*, I, 245; Frazer, *Magic Art*, II, 143, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Cf., e.g., the couch of Adonis, Theocritus, *Idyl* XV, and Bion, *Idyl* I; the processionship in which Marduk was carried in the New Year's festival to be united in marriage with the mother-goddess, *Nebuchadrezzar East India House Inscription*, III, 70-IV, 6; the chariot that Ningirsu mounted to go to Bau, *Gudea*, Cyl. B, XVI, 15 ff.; the chariot which Istar offered to Gilgamesh, *Gilgamesh Epic*, Tablet V, 10 ff.; the nuptial couch of Istar and Idin-Dagan, Radau, *Miscellaneous Sumerian Texts (Hilprecht Anniversary Volume)*, No. 2 (better translated by Langdon, *Sumerian Grammar*, pp. 196 ff.). All are strikingly alike. Cf. too Ovid's description of the chariot of the Sun, *Metam.*, II, 107 ff.

<sup>4</sup> See Frazer, *Spirits of the Corn*, I, 292 ff.; II, 337 ff. The horse was beloved by Istar and was a form assumed by one of her lovers, *Gilgamesh Epic*, Tablet VI, 53 ff. Cf. also the horses dedicated to the sun, II Kings 23:11.

<sup>5</sup> Cf., e.g., Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, pp. 241 ff.

<sup>6</sup> See Albright, *JBL*, XXXVII, 123 f.

<sup>7</sup> Indeed the *Testament of Solomon* describes the Shunamite, manifestly the Shulamite of Canticles, as actually playing the rôle of seducer; see McCown, *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, I, 116 ff.

<sup>8</sup> See Farnell, *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 81 ff.; Frazer, *Adonis*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 201 ff.; Ramsay in *DB*, V, 122.

<sup>9</sup> This passage has always occasioned great difficulty to interpreters; see Martin, *Song of Songs (New Century Bible)*, pp. 319 f.

<sup>10</sup> See Burney, *Judges*, pp. 393 f.

fertility rite like the Roman Cerealia or Robigalia.<sup>1</sup> The adjuration to the maidens of Jerusalem not to arouse love prematurely (2:7, *et passim*) would seem to suggest that this passage in its original setting indicated that the women were engaged in some rite of sympathetic magic like that connected with the Tammuz cult which was intended to arouse love between god and goddess at the proper season, viz., at the time when the growing season should begin. This would seem to be confirmed by the references to the passing of winter and the coming of spring; e.g.,

I went down into the nut-garden to look at the verdure of the valley,  
To see whether the grapevine had budded, and the pomegranates had  
bloomed [6:11].  
Let us go early to the vineyards; let us see whether the grapevine has  
budded,  
Whether the vine-blossom has opened, and the pomegranates have  
bloomed [7:13].  
Arise, my love, and come away; for, lo, the winter is past;  
The rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth;  
The time of pruning has come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard;  
The fig-tree is ripening her figs, and the grapevines give forth fragrance  
[2:10 ff.].

The linguistic peculiarities of Canticles are numerous and striking.<sup>2</sup> There is a remarkably large number of hapaxlegomena, many peculiar words and forms, a striking deviation from the ordinary rules of grammar and syntax, and other peculiarities like the uniform use of the particle ש for אשר. These, together with the references to northern localities rather than southern (e.g., Lebanon, Hermon, Damascus, Tirzah, Sharon, Gilead, Mahanaim, Hesbon, Bathrabbim, Baal-hamon), have led scholars to make the book a northern production. This would fall in well with our interpretation and afford added evidence for it. As all scholars agree, the fertility cult was alien to the Hebrews and was taken over by them from the agricultural Canaanites when they gave up their early nomadic life and settled on the land, and it was in the agricultural north rather than in the

<sup>1</sup> In the former red foxes figured; in the latter red puppies. For these festivals see *inter alia* Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, pp. 77 ff., 90 f.; Mannhardt, *Mythische Forschungen*, pp. 107 ff. For analogous customs with the Arabs see Wellhausen, *Reste Arabischen Heidentums*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 157 f. Goldziher, *Muhammedische Studien*, I, 34 f.

<sup>2</sup> For a good statement of these see Cannon, *The Song of Songs*, pp. 142 ff.

semi-nomadic south that the cult flourished. It is not that these linguistic peculiarities in Canticles are provincialisms, as many commentators have maintained, but rather that many of them are alien in origin, and that origin would seem to be found in the Tammuz cult.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, if any further argument were needed to convince the most skeptical, it would seem to be supplied by a text recently published by Ebeling.<sup>2</sup> A closer parallel to Canticles it would be difficult to find. It is much closer than the Syrian wedding songs. The structure of the poem is the same (two lovers alternating in praise of each other's charms); the general theme is the same (love); many of the phrases are quite identical; the figures of the garden, the cedar, the dove, and the like are introduced in similar fashion; its lines breathe the same delight in love; and, most striking of all, it is a Tammuz hymn and was part of the liturgy used in the worship of Tammuz and Ištar!

The interpretation of Canticles herewith presented may not be without its difficulties, but I hope to have shown that it is at least not far-fetched nor strained, and it is just possible that it may be the secret to the book after all. Indeed our evidences would seem to point most emphatically in this direction. In its present form Canticles is an anthology of songs, coming from different ages but having to do with the common theme, love. What unity there is in the book is due largely to this common theme. Like other Old Testament books it has had a long and complicated history.<sup>3</sup> There was first the original liturgy, which must have taken a long time to develop and itself went through many changes. In the course of time this gradually came to be reinterpreted and adapted to meet changing conditions, beliefs, and practices; and doubtless parts of it were lost along the way. About the residuum gathered other songs of like nature, drawn from various sources. Much, if not all, of the original char-

<sup>1</sup> A full discussion of this point would take us too far afield, but one peculiarity might be noted, the exclusive use of  $\text{𐤎}$ . The origin of  $\text{𐤎}$  is unquestionably to be found in the Babylonian *ša*. It came to the Hebrews through the Canaanites whose civilization we know was fundamentally Babylonian.

<sup>2</sup> *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*, Heft IV, No. 158; translated by Ebeling, *MDOG*, No. 58, 1917, pp. 49 f., and by Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*<sup>2</sup>, pp. 464 ff.

<sup>3</sup> That this was not the unique experience of O.T. writings is well brought out by the history of the Gilgames Epic in Babylonia through its many versions and adaptations; see Jastrow and Clay, *The Old Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, pp. 9 ff.

acter of the poem was forgotten and it came to be thought of as a song of love, with its two chief characters standing as types of the ideal lover.<sup>1</sup> Its use, however, as a religious song in connection with the coming of spring continued in certain circles:<sup>2</sup> although others, more acute than most, looked askance upon the book. Then the name of Solomon as king par excellence got attached to it. Finally came the day of the allegorical method of interpretation and this together with the prestige of Solomon's name did much to smooth its path to general acceptance. To make it still more acceptable the panegyric on love (8:6 f.) crept into the text,<sup>3</sup> and lo, in a generation or two the book had become canonical, "The Song of Songs"!

<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in the Babylonian parallel "the son," originally Tammuz, is the type of the ideal lover; cf. Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*<sup>2</sup>, p. 466.

<sup>2</sup> Old customs, forms and institutions die hard. The interpretation and application may change, but the substance remains.

<sup>3</sup> Jastrow has well shown how interpolations by pious scribes helped another book into the Jewish Canon, *The Gentle Cynic*, pp. 71 ff.